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**Cultural Fit, Mentorship and College and Life Satisfaction of  
Racial and Ethnic Minority Students**

**Le Ondra Clark, M.S.**

University of Wisconsin -Madison

**Doriane Besson, B.A.**

University of Wisconsin -Madison

**Alberta M. Gloria , Ph.D.** (agloria@wisc.edu)

University of Wisconsin -Madison

**Jeanett Castellanos, Ph.D.** (castellj@uci.edu)

University of California-Irvine

**Alexandra James, B.A.**

University of California-Irvine

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**Abstract**

This study examined the degree to which perceived mentorship and cultural fit within the university predicted college satisfaction and life satisfaction for 238 racial and ethnic minority undergraduates from two university contexts. Significant differences for perception of mentorship, perception of university environment, and cultural congruity were found by site, gender, and mentor status. Cultural congruity was a consistent predictor of college and life satisfaction, however, perception of the university environment was the strongest predictor for college satisfaction. Limitations, future research directions, and implications of the study's findings are discussed.

**REM Students and Mentoring**

- Despite increase in REM students attending college, graduation rates are not increasing relative to enrollment rates (Henry, 2000)
- Educational experiences include
  - Discrimination and prejudice within learning context (Hurtado & Faye Carter, 1997)

- Disjointed sense of belonging to the institution resulting in feeling unwelcomed, alienated, and oppressed (Turner, 1994)
- Cultural incongruity of personal and university values (Gloria & Segura-Herrera, 2004)
- Mentoring increases
  - Self-efficacy (Santos & Reigadas, 2002)
  - Positive perceptions of environment and cultural congruity (Gloria, & Robinson Kurpius, 2001; Gloria & Ho, 2003)
  - Sense of belonging in college (Hurtado & Faye Carter, 1997)
  - College (Freeman, 1999) and academic (Pascarella & Terenzini, 1991) adjustment and psychological well-being
  - “Psychosocial comfort that empowers the student” (Redmond, 1990, p. 191)
    - Navigation of the university system
    - Degree conferral
  - Academic persistence decisions (Gloria & Ho, 2003) and delays attrition (Redmond, 1990)

## **Settings and Procedures**

- Settings
  - Setting 1: West Coast university ~ 23,500 students – 57.2% REM
  - Setting 2: Midwestern university ~ 42,000 students – 11% REM
- Same procedures used across settings
- Participants recruited from classroom and student organizations
- Counterbalanced instruments, demographic sheet placed first
- 15 to 20 minutes to complete survey
- No incentive or remuneration provided
- Response rate
  - Setting 1: ~ 90%
  - Setting 2: ~ 70%

## **Student Participants**

- 277 students completed surveys
  - 39 surveys excluded
  - 238 total sample
- Settings
  - Site 1 = 113
  - Site 2 = 125
- Gender
  - 88 males (38.4%)
  - 141 females (61.6%)
  - 9 missing
- Age = 20.59 (*SD* = 2.10)
  - Range: 18 to 40

- GPA = 3.13 (*SD* = 2.10)
  - Range: 1.80 to 4.00
- Class standing
  - 30 freshman (12.6%)
  - 50 sophomores (21.0%)
  - 47 juniors (19.7%)
  - 106 seniors (44.5%)
  - 5 missing
- Race and ethnicity
  - 70 Asian Americans (29.4%)
  - 66 African American (27.7%)
  - 48 Chicano/Latino (20.2%)
  - 12 Native American (5.0%)
  - 22 Multiracial (9.2%)
  - 18 “Other” (7.6%)
  - 2 missing
- 206 students (92.8%) had continuous enrollment
- 109 had mentors (47.4%)

## Instruments

Scale	Construct	Items	Likert scale	$\alpha$
Cultural Congruity Scale (CCS; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996)	Fit of personal and university values	13	1 ( <i>Strongly Disagree</i> ) 4 ( <i>Strongly Agree</i> )	.85
University Environment Scale (UES; Gloria & Robinson Kurpius, 1996)	Perception of university environment	14	1 ( <i>Strongly Disagree</i> ) 4 ( <i>Strongly Agree</i> )	.82
Mentoring Scale (MS1; Tenenbaum, Crosby, & Gliner, 2001)	Psychosocial support, instrumental, and networking mentoring activities (3 subscales)	19	1 ( <i>Strongly Disagree</i> ) 5 ( <i>Strongly Agree</i> )	.97 .88 .87
Mentors Scale (MS2; Gloria, Robinson Kurpius, Hamilton, & Willson, 1999)	Perception of being mentored	5	1 ( <i>Strongly Disagree</i> ) 4 ( <i>Strongly Agree</i> )	.86
Yearly Evaluation of Services by Students Scale (YESS; Howard Community College, 1991)	Perception of college satisfaction	33	1 ( <i>Very Dissatisfied</i> ) 5 ( <i>Very Satisfied</i> )	.85
Satisfaction with Life Scale (SWLS; Diener, Enmones, Larsons, & Griffen, 1985)	Satisfaction with life	5	1 ( <i>Completely Disagree</i> ) 7 ( <i>Completely Agree</i> )	.71

## Results

### 2 x 2 x 2 MANOVA

- Significant main effects
  - site [ $F(5, 199) = 3.90, p \leq .01, \eta^2 = .09$ ]
    - Site 1 higher CCS than Site 2
    - Site 2 higher MS2 than Site 1
  - gender [ $F(5, 199) = 2.45, p \leq .05, \eta^2 = .06$ ]
    - Females higher MS2 than males
  - mentor status [ $F(5,199) = 44.51, p \leq .001, \eta^2 = .53$ ]
    - Students with mentors had higher UES, MS2, and YESS than students without mentors
  - Nonsignificant interactions ( $p > .05$ )

### 2 Three-step hierarchical regressions predicting satisfaction performed

Step	College Satisfaction (YESS): 36% $F(6, 211) = 20.89, p \leq .001$	Life Satisfaction (SWLS): 10% $F(6, 211) = 4.96, p \leq .001$
<b>1</b> Site Gender Mentor	.09 $\Delta r$ -squared $\Delta F(3, 208) = 6.93, p \leq .001$ MS2 ( $\beta = .31, t = 4.55, p \leq .001$ )	Nonsignificant
<b>2</b> CCS UES	.28 $\Delta r$ -squared $\Delta F(2, 206) = 46.40, p \leq .001$ CCS ( $\beta = .17, t = 2.48, p \leq .05$ ) UES ( $\beta = .45, t = 6.84, p \leq .001$ )	.08 $\Delta r$ -squared $\Delta F(2, 206) = 9.02, p < .001$ CCS ( $\beta = .29, t = 3.65, p < .001$ )
<b>3</b> MS2	Nonsignificant	.02 $\Delta r$ -squared $\Delta F(1, 205) = 5.31, p \leq .05$ MS2 ( $\beta = .24, t = 2.30, p \leq .05$ )

### Strengths of Relationships

- Fisher's  $r$  to  $z$ -transformation scores indicated differences in the strengths of relationships by
  - Site: stronger for Site 1 than Site 2
    - UES and YESS ( $z = 3.48, p \leq .001$ )
    - MS2 and YESS ( $z = 2.62, p \leq .01$ )
  - Gender: stronger for males than females
    - UES and SWLS ( $z = 2.10, p \leq .05$ )
    - MS2 and SWLS ( $z = 2.25, p \leq .05$ )
  - Mentor: stronger for those students without a mentor than those with a mentor
    - UES and YESS ( $z = 2.06, p \leq .05$ )

## Students with Mentors

- No significant correlations between MS1-PS, MS1-I, and MS1-N with YESS and SWLS ( $p > .05$ )
- Most frequently reported mentor activities
  - convey feelings of respect ( $n = 87, 83.7\%$ )
  - serve as a role model ( $n = 84, 81.6\%$ )
  - convey empathy ( $n = 83, 80.6\%$ )
- Least frequently reported mentor activities
  - buffer potentially harmful professional relationships ( $n = 36, 34.9\%$ )
  - provide authorship on publications ( $n = 27, 27.0\%$ )

## Discussion and Implications

- Study's findings both consistent and divergent from previous research
- Cultural congruity was consistently predictive of college and life satisfaction
  - Students in high REM context (Site 1) had higher cultural congruity than students in low REM context (Site 2)
  - Findings consistent with literature indicating psychosocial comfort, confidence and cultural validation (Redmond, 1990) and college satisfaction (Allen, 1998; Allen, Epps, & Haniff, 1991) increases with mentorship

*\* Attend to mentorship as means for students' personal and academic growth*
- Perception of university environment most predictive of college satisfaction
  - Students with mentors had more positive perceptions of university environment and higher college satisfaction than those without mentors
  - Climate or welcomeness of environment influences academic persistence (Gloria & Castellanos, 2003) and psychological well being (Gloria, Castellanos, & Orozco, 2005)

*\* Use collective mentoring to connect students to environment*
- Females reported higher perceptions of being mentored, yet males had significantly stronger relationship of the university environment and perception of being mentored
  - Male students have less social support in university settings and are less likely to reach out for educational support (Hernandez, Cervantes, Castellanos, & Gloria, 2005)
  - Mentoring relationships may play more salient role for males versus females due to stronger influence of environment on males

*\* Assume REM male students could use support even though they do not seek it, addressing fit and impact of environment in the mentoring relationship*
- For students with mentors, psychosocial, instrumental, and networking activities were unrelated to college and life satisfaction
  - Explanations for nonrelationships of mentoring activities and satisfaction
    - dissatisfied with mentor activities
    - mentors not adequately preparing mentees for activities
    - stage of mentoring relationship not fully developed

*\*Further research on other factors that influence students' perceptions of mentoring relationships needed*

- Most frequently reported mentor activities focused on personal relationships between mentees and mentors
  - Feeling respected, showing empathy, and having a role model

*\*Focus on interpersonal relationship building*
- Least frequently reported mentor activities
  - Buffer from negative interactions or experiences
  - Provide opportunities for publication

*\*Consider research and publication opportunities to increase students' efficacy of skills needed for graduate study*

### **Limitations ~ Future Research**

- Cross-sectional study with nonrandom sampling ~ Conduct longitudinal study with university support to access students
- REM students aggregated ~ Conduct between and within group research for different racial and ethnic groups
- Mentoring relationship not fully explored ~ Assess origin, duration, strength, and satisfaction of mentoring relationship
- Underassessment of mentorship limited explanation of findings ~ Conduct qualitative studies that more fully examine students' perspectives about mentoring relationships

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